

The Clipper Visits...

Kathryn Hess

Personal Trainer Brings In-Home Fitness to Duxbury By CHRIS PECK



Kathryn Hess

Personal trainer Kathryn Hess is hoping people in Duxbury will choose a path to physical fitness that leads her company down the road to success.

The owner of KLFH Fitness Consultants has found personal training to be the answer for many who want to get in shape. She boasts of 22 clients, mostly in the Boston area, since venturing out on her own 2 years ago. Now she is trying that again.

Hess moved to Duxbury a year ago to be near her boyfriend and now would like to bring her business with her.

"It is difficult business to bring to a new area," she said. "A lot of it is word of mouth, referrals."

Personal trainers have "become the rage" over the past 5 years, according to Hess. About 65 percent of the customers in 2 Boston clubs where Hess works request personal trainers, she added.

Clubs encourage the use of trainers "for safety reasons" and to help members "learn how to do all the exercises properly and to use their time most efficiently," she said.

This is normally a busy time in the physical fitness business because many have made a New Year's resolution to lose weight and get into shape. Hess already has 2 local clients who have found inviting a personal trainer to their home is more convenient than going to a club.

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"I have one client who is a doctor and she just had a baby a few weeks ago. She also has a 5-year-old. She doesn't have to worry about club fees or getting a babysitter. I come right there to her home and it obviously works out well for her," Hess said.

The experience doesn't have to be expensive, she said, estimating the cost at between \$30 and \$50 a session for 1 to 1-1/2 hours, depending on the travel time.

She works especially well with women, she said.

"Women feel more comfortable telling me 'I have this fat on my thighs I can't get rid of'," said Hess, a 27-year-old blonde with very little body fat.

When a male client seeks help, Hess usually brings a male trainer with her.

"They understand each other much better," she said.

She has 2 persons working with her clients in Boston and one available to work in Duxbury.

She moved to the Boston area shortly after receiving her bachelor's degree in physical education from Penn State University. She also has received certification from Fitness Resource Associates and the American Fitness and Aerobics Assn.

Recently, she began working with the National Academy of Sports Medicine, including some workshops that she hopes will lead to a third certification.

Hess said it is not necessary to have a gym in your home in order to use a personal trainer. But she would suggest purchasing a set of free weights, an investment of about \$60.

Her time with clients varies from 3 times a week to once a month.

"Sometimes it helps just to have someone to answer to," said Hess. "If you have to report in, say once a week, people tend to stay on schedule."

Hess works on weight management, resistance band exercises and Swiss Ball utilization (another resistance exercise).

The resistance bands, she describes as big rubber bands of different widths and thickness. The Swiss Ball is like a big beach ball and the person's body and gravity make the resistance. Hess said she uses this in abdominal and lower back exercises and in squats.

She also offers counseling on nutrition for those who need it.

"I kind of screen people about what they are eating," she said. "I think everyone these days has a good idea of what's good and what's bad. It's just doing it," she added.

A typical client wants to lose 15 pounds and gain some strength, she said.

"Losing weight and gaining energy and maybe a different focus" is how Hess describes what her clients want. She said many are women between ages 40 and 50.

"If they have a career they might want to reduce stress. If they don't have a career, they might want a different focus, something for themselves," she said.

One of Hess's male clients, who is the owner of a large accounting firm, says he knows he needs to lose weight but mostly likes the exercise program for the release from a high stress job.

Hess meets him at his health club for an hour's worth of training 2 to 3 times a week at lunch time.

The personal trainer is available Monday through Friday and on weekends. "I try to keep a flexible schedule for people," she said.

In addition to losing weight, Hess said, it is important to build muscle and that sometimes discourages people who need a scale to convince them they are making progress.

"I tell people to pick out something they wear that is uncomfortable," she said.

Muscle weighs more than fat so that a trimmer, firmer body may not be revealed in pounds displayed on a scale but would be noticeable in uncomfortable clothes that now fit, she explained.

"I try to steer people away from getting on a scale

every day. Your weight may not change but your shape and size do," she said.

Reducing fat also increases muscle and that increases a person's metabolism every day, Hess said. "If you exercise every morning that will increase your metabolism as the day goes on," she said.

"If you have 2 persons, one with 20 percent body fat and another with 30 percent body fat, the one with 20 percent body fat is going to burn more calories just sitting at rest," she said.

Hess was fairly lucky in breaking into the personal trainer business.

"I think I did the right thing by working with someone else." She began in Boston with First Step Fitness at Mike's Gym. After working there for a year, she decided to step out on her own.

"I had one client," she said, who was allowed to follow her when she left the business. "The first 8 months were tough, then it started really kicking in," she said.

Good referrals enabled her to expand.

"I guess my clients are happy with the work I'm doing," she said.